1.   In a computing system that includes a display screen that is capable of displaying a variety of types of media, a method for providing a dynamically controllable user interface that embraces the variety of types of media, the method comprising the acts of:

displaying a menu system on the display screen, wherein the menu system includes first and second categories selectable by a viewer;

displaying the first category at a selected location of the display screen; and

upon receiving an input command corresponding to a selection of the second category by the viewer, ratcheting the first category from the selected position so as to automatically replace the first category with the second category at the selected position of the display screen.

2.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the act of displaying the first category is performed by a preset, default setting.

3.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the act of displaying the first category is performed upon receipt of a first input command, wherein the first input command is received prior to the input command corresponding to the selection of the second category by the viewer.

4.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the act of displaying a menu system includes displaying the first and second categories in a hierarchical order.

5.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the first category corresponds to a first type of media and the second category corresponds to a second type of media, and wherein the first type of media is different from the second type of media.

6.   A method as recited in claim 5, wherein the first type of media includes television programming, and wherein the second type of media includes a web page.

7.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the act of displaying the first category includes displaying one or more subcategories corresponding to the first category.

8.   A method as recited in claim 7, wherein the one or more subcategories are capable of scrolling horizontally.

9.   A method as recited in claim 7, wherein the first category corresponds to a first type of media.

10.   A method as recited in claim 9, wherein one of the one or more subcategories corresponding to the first category includes a selectable option that performs a function specific to the first type of media.

11.   A method as recited in claim 9, wherein one of the one or more subcategories corresponding to the first category includes a selectable option that initiates an application corresponding to a third type of media.

12.   A method as recited in claim 9, further comprising the act of displaying the first type of media in a background display of the display screen while the menu system is displayed in a foreground display of the display screen and the selected position remains constant.

13.   A method as recited in claim 7, wherein the act of automatically replacing includes replacing a display of the one or more subcategories corresponding to the first category with a display of one or more subcategories corresponding to the second category.

14.   A method as recited in claim 13, wherein the second category corresponds to a second type of media.

15.   A method as recited in claim 14, wherein one of the one or more subcategories corresponding to the second category includes a selectable option that performs a function specific to the second type of media.

16.   A method as recited in claim 14, wherein one of the one or more subcategories corresponding to the second category includes a selectable option that initiates an application corresponding to a third type of media.

17.   A method as recited in claim 14, further comprising the act of displaying the second type of media in a background display of the display screen while the menu system is displayed in a foreground display of the display screen and the selected position remains constant.
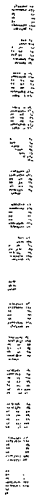
18. A dynamically controllable menu system for use with a display screen that provides options selectable by a user to perform one or more functions on a variety of different types of media, the menu system comprising:

a plurality of categories displayed on the display screen, wherein the categories are capable of ratcheting such that any category from the plurality of categories that is selected by a user is displayed at a selected location on the display screen, while having the selected position remain constant; and

a plurality of subcategories corresponding to the plurality of categories, wherein the only subcategories displayed on the display screen at a given instant in time are the one or more subcategories corresponding to the selected category displayed at the selected position on the display screen at the given instant in time.

19. A menu system as recited in claim 18, wherein the plurality of categories includes a first category specific to programming, a second category specific to the Internet, and a third category specific to electronic communication.

20. A menu system as recited in claim 19, wherein the subcategories corresponding to the first, second and third categories respectively allow a user to launch a function to modify a display of programming, modify a display of a web page, and participate in electronic communication.

1 21. A menu system as recited in claim 20, wherein subcategories corresponding

2 to the third category allows a user to participate in electronic communication while at least

3 one of programming or a web page is displayed on the display screen.

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5 22. A menu system as recited in claim 18, wherein at least one of the

6 subcategories launches an application that provides current information on a selectable

7 topic.

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23.   A menu system for use in a computing system that includes a variety of options available to a user for controlling a variety of media, the menu system comprising:

a contextual option, which upon selection, controls an aspect of media displayed on a display device; and

a static option, which upon selection, executes a mini application while displaying the media on the display device, wherein the contextual option and the static option are organized in a categorical order that includes a plurality of categories, and the order is capable of ratcheting upon a receipt of user input such that a category of the order that is selected by the user is displayed at a selected position on the display screen.

24.   A menu system as recited in claim 23, wherein subcategories correspond to the categories, and wherein the subcategories are selectable to a user to independently perform functions on a variety of different types of media.

25.   A menu system as recited in claim 24, wherein the variety of different types of media includes programming, web pages, and electronic communication.

26.   A menu system as recited in claim 24, wherein the categories are displayed in a foreground display on a display screen and at least one type of the media is displayed in a background display of the display screen.

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27.   A computer program product for implementing within a computing system a method for providing a ratcheting menu system on a display screen that interfaces between a user and a variety of media, the computer program product comprising:

a computer readable medium for providing computer program code means utilized to implement the method, wherein the computer program code means is comprised of executable code for implementing the acts of:

displaying the menu system on the display screen, wherein the menu system includes first and second categories selectable by a viewer;

displaying the first category at a selected location of the display screen; and

upon receiving a user input command corresponding to a selection of the second category by the viewer, ratcheting the first category from the selected position so as to automatically replace the first category with the second category at the selected position of the display screen, while having the selected position remain constant.

28.   A computer program product as recited in claim 27, wherein the act of displaying the first category is performed by a preset, default setting.

29.   A computer program product as recited in claim 27, wherein the act of displaying the first category is performed upon receipt of a first input command, wherein the first input command is received prior to the input command corresponding to the selection of the second category by the viewer.

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30.   A computer program product as recited in claim 27, further comprising executable code for implementing the act of displaying the menu system in a foreground display of the display screen while displaying a type of media in a background display of the display screen.

31.   A computer program product as recited in claim 27, wherein the first and second categories include selectable subcategories, wherein at least one of the selectable subcategories corresponds to launching an application independent of the type of media displayed in the background display of the display screen.

32.   A computer program product as recited in claim 30, wherein the first category corresponds to a first type of media that is displayable on the display screen, and wherein the second category includes options that correspond to a second type of media that is displayable on the display screen.